

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 02201 01 OF 02 112228Z

70

ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 INR-07 L-03 IGA-02

H-02 /042 W

----- 069788

R 112140Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9989

:AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 1081

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAGUA 2201

THIS MESSAGE IS FROM EMBASSY AND DAO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, HO, NU

SUBJECT: NICARAGUAN VIEWS ON HONDURAN POL/MIL SITUATION AND  
POTENTIAL ARMS RACE

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2114

SUMMARY: CAPTAIN ANASTASIO SOMOZA, THE PRESIDENT'S OLDEST SON, DELINEATED IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION CONNECTION BETWEEN NICARAGUAN ARMS POLICY, HONDURAN POLITICAL SITUATION AND CONTINUED MILGP PRESENCE. HE THOUGHT THAT NICARAGUANS MIGHT HAVE TO JOIN ARMS RACE IF HONDURAN POLITICAL SITUATION TURNED ADVERSE TO SOMOZAS. WE INFER THAT CONTINUED PRESENCE OF MILGP IN HONDURAS MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO PREVENT THIS CONTINGENCY AND THUS IMPACT ON NICARAGUAN-HONDURAN RELATIONS ON ANY CONTEMPLATED CHANGES OUGHT TO BE CONSIDERED. END SUMMARY

1. WE WOULD LIKE TO SUPPLEMENT AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA'S VIEWS ON THE IMPACT OF ANY PRECIPITOUS CHANGES IN MILGP STRUCTURE IN HONDURAS WITH A REPORT OF A CONVERSATION REGARDING NICARAGUAN CONCERNS ABOUT THE HONDURAN SITUATION THAT DEFATT AND POLOFF  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANAGU 02201 01 OF 02 112228Z

HELD MAY 5 WITH CAPTAIN ANASTASIO SOMOZA PORTOCARRERO, SON AND

CONFIDANT OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA. WE BELIEVE THAT HIS OPINIONS ARE WIDELY SHARED AMONG THE NICARAGUAN MILITARY AND SUGGEST SERIOUS RAMIFICATIONS FLOWING FROM THE SUGGESTED MILGP CHANGES WHICH HAVE NOT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE BEEN GIVEN APPROPRIATE CONSIDERATION.

2. CAPTAIN SOMZA, WHO HAS BEEN ACTIVE RECENTLY IN ARRANGING PROCUREMENT OF WEAPONS THROUGH MILGP AS PART OF THE NATIONAL GUARD (GN) ARMS MODERNIZATION PLAN, TOLD ABOUT SOME OF THE CONTROVERSIES WHICH HAVE ARISEN WITHIN THE NATIONAL GUARD REGARDING THIS QUESTION. HE CLAIMS THAT HIS FATHER, FOR EXAMPLE, IS RELUCTANT TO MAKE ANY EXPENDITURES FOR NEWWEAPONS, AND DEVOTES MUCH GREATER PRIORITY TO BUDGET AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS CONSIDERATION. ANOTHER GROUP WANTS TO HUNT FOR BARGAINS AMONG THE ATTRACTIVE OFFERS CURRENTLY BEING MADE BY OTHER ARMS SUPPLIERS LIKE BELGIUM, ISRAEL, ETC. STILL ANOTHER GROUP, ALARMED BY NICARAGUA'S INFERIOR WEAPONS POSITION WOULD LIKE TO GO MUCH FARTHER AND NOT STOP AT MODERNIZING AND REPLACING WEAPONRY, BUT BEEF UP THE NATIONAL GUARD'S DEFENSE CAPABILITY SUBSTANTIALLY THROUGH AGGRESSIVE PROCUREMENT OF A PANOPLY OF NEW SYSTEMS, INCLUDING INTERCEPTORS, TANKS, APC'S, MISSILES. THUS FAR, THE MODERNIZATION THESIS, WITH WHICH CAPT SOMOZA IS STRONGLY IDENTIFIED, HAS PREVALIED, AS IN THE CASE OF THE CONTEMPLATED M-16 PURCHASES.

3. ASKED ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE CONCERN OF THE GN HAWKS, SOMOZA RECITED THE BY-NOW FAMILIAR ANXIETY ABOUT THE CUBAN THREAT FOLLOWING THE ANGOLA DEBACLE AND GROWING DOUBTS ABOUT THE US WILL TO HELP ITS FRIENDS. HE INDICATED HOWEVER THAT SOME OF THE INITIAL FEAR ON THIS SCORE HAD GIVEN WAY TO A COOLER APPRAISAL OF THE POSSIBILITY OF THIS PARTICULAR CONTINGENCY. HOWEVER, HE ALSO STATED THAT THE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 02201 02 OF 02 112236Z

70

ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 INR-07 L-03 IGA-02

H-02 /042 W

----- 069926

R 112140Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9990

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANAGUA 2201

CONCERN STEMMED FROM A MUCH MORE REALISTIC WORRY ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN NEIGHBORING HONDURAS. CAPT. SOMOZA EXPLAINED THAT PRESIDENT SOMOZA AND THE GUARD IN GENERAL VIEWED WITH ALARM BOTH THE SHAKY EQUILIBRIUM ACHIEVED BY THE HONDURAN MILITARY LEADERS AND THE EXISTENCE AMONG THEM OF STRONGLY ANTI-SOMOZA ELEMENTS WHO ALSO TENDED TO LOOK FAVORABLY UPON CUBA. BECAUSE OF WHAT THE NICARAGUANS SAW AS THE FUNDAMENTAL INSTABILITY OF THE GOH, IT FEARED THAT THE BALANCE COULD BE UPSET AT ANY MOMENT AND IN THE FLUID SITUATION THEREBY CREATED, AN ANTI-SOMOZA GROUP OF LEFTIST-NATIONALISTS MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONSOLIDATE THEMSELVES IN POWER. SHOULD THIS OCCUR, HONDURAS, IT IS BELIEVED, MIGHT BECOME CUBA'S SURROGATE IN HARBORING, TRAINING, AND OTHERWISE ASSISTING ANTI-SOMOZA GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES IN NORTHERN NICARAGUA. THIS IN TURN COULD LEAD TO DIRECT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE MILITARY FORCES ALONG THE BORDER WITH CONSEQUENT ESCALATION FROM THERE.

4. CAPT. SOMOZA BEMOANED THAT THE CIA WAS SO HAMSTRUNG THAT IT COULD DO LITTLE AGAINST ANY HONDURAN GOVERNMENT HOSTILE BOTH TO THE US AND NICARAGUA; HE ASSUMED THAT DIRECT US MILITARY INTERVENTION WAS ALSO OUT OF THE QUESTION. NICARAGUA, HE PREDICTED, WOULD BE LEFT TO ITS  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANAGU 02201 02 OF 02 112236Z

OWN DEVICES, BUT IN AN INFERIOR WEAPONS SITUATION. HE IMPLIED THEREFORE, THAT AT THE FIRST SIGHT OF SUCH GOVERNMENTAL CHANGES, NICARAGUA'S RELUCTANCE TO STRENGTHEN ITS MILITARY CAPABILITY WOULD CRUMBLE AND IT WOULD DO WHAT IT COULD TO ACHIEVE WEAPONS PARITY IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME.

5. WITH OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO THE SAME TOPIC, HE WAS HIGHLY LAUDATORY OF THE PRESENCE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE GROUPS IN CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES, NOT ONLY FOR THE TECHNICAL AND MATERIAL ASSISTANCE WHICH THEY FACILITATE, BUT BECAUSE OF THEIR MODERATING INFLUENCE ON THE HOST MILITARY AT A TIME WHEN EXOTIC AND SEDUCTIVE IDEOLOGIES WERE MAKING HEADWAY. HE CITED THEM AS A DEFINITE FACTOR IN BOOSTING THE STOCK OF PRO-US, I.E., MODERATE, FORCES WITHIN THE MILITARY INSTITUTIONS AGAINST THEIR COMPETITORS.

6. COMMENT: SOMOZA'S APPRAISAL OF THE HONDURAN POLITICAL SCENE MAY BE WAY OFF THE MARK AND REFLECT A GOOD

DEAL OF PARANOIA ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE NORTH. HOWEVER, AS EMB AND DEFATT REPORTING HAS INDICATED SINCE THE OVERTHROW OF LOPEZ ARELLANA, THE SAME OR SIMILAR VIEWS ARE HELD BY A WIDE SPECTRUM OF NICARAGUAN SECURITY OFFICIALS, UP TO AND INCLUDING PRESIDENT SOMOZA. WHETHER THEY ARE RIGHT OR NOT IN THEIR ASSESSMENTS MAY THEREFORE BE LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE PROSPECT THAT THEY WILL TEND TO REACT ACCORDING TO THESE ESTIMATES. THUS, IF THE NICARAGUANS PERCEIVE THAT THE BARELY ACCEPTABLE (FOR THEM) POLITICAL BALANCE AMONG THE HONDURAN MILITARY IS UPSET AND OFFICERS WHOM THEY BELIEVE ARE ANTAGONISTIC COME TO POWER, WE CAN HYPOTHESIZE THAT THERE WILL BE CONSIDERABLY MORE PRESSURE THAN HERETOFORE WITHIN THE GN TO JOIN IN AN ARMS RACE. IF AS AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA SUGGESTS, THE ELIMINATION OF THE MILGP IN HONDURAS WOULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT IN MAINTAINING AT LEAST THE IDEOLOGICAL STATUS QUO, WE BELIEVE THAT THE IMPACT OF SUCH CHANGES ON NICARAGUAN-HONDURAN RELATIONS SHOULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED. IN VIEW OF THE VALUE PLACED ON THE MILGP PRESENCE IN THESE COUNTRIES VOICED MOST RECENTLY BY CAPT. SOMOZA, IT IS NOT BEYOND THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY THAT NICARAGUA WILL PANIC AT ITS ELIMINATION IN HONDURAS. IF THE FILGP RESTRUCTURING OTHERWISE ENHANCES THE CHANCES OF ATTAINING POWER OF

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANAGU 02201 02 OF 02 112236Z

ANTI-SOMOZA ELEMENTS, THE NICARAGUAN REACTION WILL INCREASE PROPORTIONATELY.

THEBERGE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** MILITARY BUILDUP, MILITARY PLANS, MILITARY ADVISERS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 11 MAY 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976MANAGU02201  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760182-0115  
**From:** MANAGUA  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760568/aaaacgio.tel  
**Line Count:** 201  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION PM  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 76 TEGUCIGALPA 2114  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 02 APR 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <02 APR 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <05 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** NICARAGUAN VIEWS ON HONDURAN POL/MIL SITUATION AND POTENTIAL ARMS RACE  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PINT, MORG, MASS, MPOL, HO, NU, (SOMOZA PORTOCARRERO, ANASTASIO)  
**To:** STATE TEGUCIGALPA  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006